

Understanding Scripture

at

Face Value

Plain & Simple

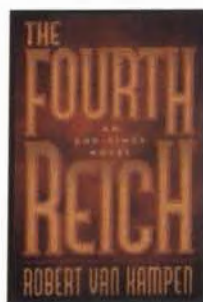
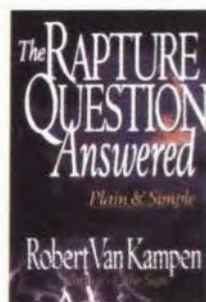
ROBERT VAN KAMPEN
CHARLES COOPER

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

Why does the Bible appear to be confusing at times? Why can it be so difficult to “handle accurately” the Word of God? Foundational to an understanding of Scripture is the consistent employment of principles of interpretation. *Understanding Scripture at Face Value* is a succinct handbook that introduces students of the Bible to several key standards that will equip them with the tools necessary to plunge into the Scriptures without fear of being able to accurately handle God's Word. With this face-value understanding, the Bible becomes an approachable guide for living.

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SOLA SCRIPTURA

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Plain & Simple

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1

Face Value

As I look back over years of wrestling to understand what the Word of God teaches, I have come to realize that the only valid way to truly discover what the writers of Scripture intended to communicate is to accept what is written at *face value*. By face value I mean the normal, natural, customary sense of the text intended by the Author/author at the time it was written.

FACE-VALUE INTERPRETATION DESCRIBED

The definition of a face-value understanding of Scripture has three very important components. First, there is the notion of accepting what is written in its most *normal, natural, customary sense*. An interpreter of Scripture must discover what the individual words and phrases meant to the original audience. We cannot read a modern meaning into a biblical term. For example, in the Lord's model prayer in Matthew 6:12, the term *debts* is used. The modern notion of a debt (financial) and what Jesus intended (sin) are not the same.

The second key idea in our definition of "face value" is the word *intended*. While a passage of Scripture can have more than one application, *it can have only one meaning*. That meaning was determined by the Author/author at the time the text was written. The interpreter's job is to discover that intended meaning. The safest means of achieving this is by accepting what the Author/author had to say at face value. To do otherwise is to substitute what the writer intended to say for what the reader thinks he should have said.

The last key phrase in our definition is *Author/author*. The interpreter must recognize that Scripture has a divine Author

(God) who worked through human authors. God was the superintendent and humans were the scribes. God made sure that what was written was indeed His will and His words. Such constraints make it absolutely necessary that Scripture be taken at face value.

However, at this point I must give you one word of caution: taking Scripture at face value does not mean merely reading a verse and accepting the *simple sense* of the text. By *simple sense* I mean attributing to the passage in question, the first impression one gets from reading it without any other investigation of the textual meaning. If the reader limits his understanding of a passage to the simple sense of the text, he accepts the black and white of what is written without question. This is not what we refer to as a face-value understanding of what a particular passage is trying to communicate. For example, John 3:17 states, "For God did not send the Son into the *world* to judge the *world*, but that the *world* might be saved through Him." (Italics added) If one accepts the *simple sense* of this verse, he might incorrectly conclude that Jesus saved the "whole world," an heretical theological doctrine known as universalism.

The simple sense might give the reader the initial impression that *every person ever born* is going to be saved simply because of the work of Christ and no more. However, an investigation of the Scriptures reveal that Salvation is only attributed to the one who repents of his sins and puts his trust in the shed blood of Jesus, something that many have clearly refused to do. Notice John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." For universalism to be true, this verse spoken by the Lord Himself would be in error. God forbid! Let all men be made liars!

Thus, understanding God's Word at face value does not mean "wooden literalism." We cannot limit our understanding to the simple sense, just like we cannot ignore the many obvious figures of speech and expressions that are used in Scripture. However, we must eliminate spiritualization (replacing the obvi-

ous, literal sense with a deeper, spiritual meaning), allegorization (again, abandoning the literal sense for a meaning that is built upon a theological presupposition or school of thought), culturalization (limiting the application to the culture of the day in which it was written), and any other scheme that distorts the intended meaning and application of the original Author/author. In other words, we must allow the *Author/author to determine the meaning of what was written, not the reader*. This then is what we refer to as the *face-value* method of understanding Scripture.

TWO IMPORTANT FACE-VALUE CONDITIONS

The face-value hermeneutic articulated in this pamphlet is built upon two conditions. First, we are limiting our discussion to an English translation; and secondly, there are no contradictions in Scripture. These two conditions are very important. Without the ability to work in the original languages of Greek and Hebrew, one cannot get to the heart of what the Author/author intended to say, but is limited to an English translation. This therefore, in some cases, will take more work.

We feel very confident that the New American Standard Bible is an excellent starting point to successfully discover the meaning of a particular passage of Scripture. It is less readable than other translations, limiting its popularity among the general public. Yet, for one seeking to understand the face-value meaning of a text, it is an excellent study Bible and a good place to begin. We certainly do not have this same confidence in the Living Bible, which takes great liberty with the text yet is certainly more readable.

Working only with an English translation of the Bible, every Bible student must exercise great care in the study of the text. Every translation of the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts reflects the biases of the translators. Word choice, punctuation, and word order can influence a person's decision about the meaning of a passage of Scripture. All of these matters are not clearly and unambiguously indicated in the original

Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Therefore, translators have to make choices. They make choices which may or may not be correct. Our face-value method recognizes this fact and keeps it in mind at all times.

The second condition of our face-value understanding of what God's Word intends to communicate is the fact that there are no contradictions in Scripture. The importance of this condition cannot be overstated. Part of our responsibility as students of the Word is not only to make every attempt to understand what is written in its most natural, normal, customary sense, but also to be careful to examine all other passages that deal with whatever particular issue we are studying. Remember, and this is critical, we have not found truth until we find the single common denominator that makes all of the passages fit together without contradiction. Psalm 119:160 teaches us that "the sum of Thy Word is truth." In other words, you do not have truth until you have processed all of the passages dealing with a particular subject and found the single solution that accommodates them all!

I often explain it this way. Assume you have six different passages of Scripture dealing with the same topic. Using our face-value hermeneutic, passages 1, 3, and 5 appear to agree, saying one thing, while passages 2, 4, and 6 appear, on the surface, to be saying something quite different than the first three. Those who prefer what 1, 3, and 5 have to say, conclude that the common denominator is 15 and on 15 they will fight as if their life depended upon it, sweeping seemingly contradictory passages 2, 4, and 6 under the rug, so to speak. On the other hand, those who prefer what passages 2, 4, and 6 have to say, will likewise fight for their view (a common denominator of 12) with the same intensity, ignoring, like those who hold the opposite view, what the other passages appear to be saying.

At first glance we have an apparent problem, a contradiction of passages with people taking one side or the other to prove their point. Which answer is right, 12 or 15? If you have contradictory conclusions, they cannot both be right, can they?!

The answer is obvious. Neither position is right on its own! If you want truth, you cannot ignore any of the passages that deal with the same issue, no matter how contradictory they may first appear to be. However, I have learned from experience that if you refuse to be sidetracked by the contradiction and keep looking for resolution, you will eventually find that all the passages fit perfectly into one common denominator, in this example, 60. Now you have correlation without contradiction. Now you have the truth!

Until the common denominator that harmonizes *all* the passages is found, you do not have anything except confusion. Plain and simple. You must keep on looking for that single solution that makes all the passages come together perfectly, without contradiction, and then you will have truth, but not before then!

Therefore, to properly understand what any given passage is teaching, at face value, certain principles are necessary. None of these principles is unique to this writer—all of them have been used by careful students of the Word throughout history. These five important principles are explained in the remainder of this pamphlet, keeping them plain and simple, because in reality, they are!

2

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

SEEK TO DISCOVER THE AUTHOR/AUTHOR'S INTENDED MEANING

A very good friend of mine once attended a home Bible study in a certain city. He was a guest speaker at the church's Bible conference. Before the actual Bible study began, those in attendance fellowshiped and shared prayer requests. After the prayer time, the small group got in a circle and the group leader read the passage of Scripture that the Bible study would focus on for the evening. He then asked the question, "What does this passage *mean* to you?" and indicated that each person would be given the opportunity to answer his question. Since my friend was seated next to the leader, he started on his opposite side and proceeded around the room. My friend listened very carefully to the answers and made notes. He immediately knew that this was a golden opportunity to teach a very important principle of biblical interpretation.

First of all, the leader asked the wrong question. He should have asked the question, "What does this passage mean?" Only after that question was correctly answered could the group talk about the second question he should have asked which is, "How does this passage apply to you?" The leader confused the difference between interpretation and application. Each and every passage of Scripture has only one meaning. A passage of Scripture may have more than one possible application.

Therefore, the first principle of our face-value method of interpretation is that we begin a study of the Scriptures seeking the Author/author's intended meaning.

The meaning of every passage of Scripture was determined at the time the Author/author wrote it. The job of the interpreter is to discover that meaning. We do not have the freedom to add to or subtract from what God has written through human agents. This is the guiding principle of the face-value method of biblical interpretation.

PRINCIPLE 2

RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

The second principle has to do with the context in which a word, phrase, or larger passage is being presented. This principle involves a careful understanding of the context of the complete biblical book being studied and interpreting a given idea or principle in light of the overall thrust and nature of the book as well as its immediate context. The context involves knowing specifically who is being addressed in any given passage, the historical setting, and the circumstances in which the passage is given. I have never forgotten the truth of the simple dictum, "A text without a context is no more than a pretext." Only when you know and understand the context in which a text is written, will you know how the writer intended the passage to be understood. A frequent danger is what is commonly called "prooftexting": building an interpretation on the superficial application of a biblical text taken out of context.

For example, Luke quotes Jesus as saying, "Soul you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry" (12:19). An extreme example of taking a text out of context, or prooftexting, would be to use that statement to justify a selfish, hedonistic lifestyle. But in its proper context, Christ goes on to say in the following verse, "But God

said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you. . . .'" The text has a completely different meaning when its context is taken into consideration.

PRINCIPLE 3

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, LET SCRIPTURE INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

The third principle, equally important as the first two, is that of comparing Scripture with Scripture. We have already referred to this principle in a broad sense earlier. However, here I want to deal with two specific details. First, always let Scripture define Scripture; let the Bible be your dictionary. Search the Scriptures for the meaning of words, phrases, and key ideas.

Secondly, always interpret difficult passages in light of the clear passages. Since there are no contradictions in the Scriptures, the difficult passages must harmonize with those that are clear in their meaning. This is true whenever you study God's Word. These two key concepts are especially true when you study end-time prophecy. The book of Revelation, in particular, is loaded with information that should never be allegorized but instead, realized, by searching the Scriptures for the explanation of what is meant by the passage in question. For example, Revelation 17:12 refers to ten horns/kings that receive authority with the beast for a short time at the end of the age. Going back to Daniel 7:23–25, greater explanation is given, helping the student of prophecy gain a fuller understanding of what is being referred to in Revelation 17. Later in chapters 9 and 11 of Daniel, the 'short time' is defined. You must always let Scripture explain Scripture. When you do this, you build your case on what the Word of God wants you to know concerning any given issue because Scripture is always its own best interpreter. Careful comparison adds depth and clarity to our understanding.

PRINCIPLE 4

DETERMINE THE LITERAL REFERENCE OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

Remember that even though the Bible is to be understood at face value, it still uses *figures of speech*. A figure of speech is “any deviation either in thought or expression, from the ordinary and simple method of speaking . . . form of speech artfully varied from common usage.”¹ *A figure of speech will normally employ a comparison, a substitution, or an amplification* as a means of “artfully varying” from what we think of as common use, to better clarify the passage. If the plain sense doesn’t seem to make sense, then you’re probably dealing with some sort of figure of speech which the context or another passage of Scripture will define for you!

In addition, it is especially important for us to understand figures of speech because they are used often in prophetic texts. The following, then, will illustrate each of these three types: comparison, substitution, and amplification. Once understood, they normally can be recognized quite easily.

COMPARISON

There are three common figures of speech that are comparative in nature. The only hard part to understand about them is the names someone—not me—has tacked onto them: similes, metaphors, and idioms. The important thing is to know a figure of speech when you see one, not the technical term for it.

Similes are the easiest to recognize. The comparison is direct. Connecting words such as *like* or *as* compare two things or thoughts for the purpose of greater clarification. In Revelation 1:14, for example, Christ is described as one whose “head and . . . hair were white *like* wool, *like* snow; and His eyes

1. Instit. Orat. IX, I. 11, cited by Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford Press, 1971), 640.

were *like* a flame of fire” (emphasis added). This doesn’t mean His hair was actually wool or snow, but that it looked *like* wool or snow (i.e., white). In the same way, His eyes were not fire, literally, but were *like* a flame of fire (i.e., bright).

Metaphors, a second common example of a comparative figure of speech, employ an implied comparison rather than the direct comparison a simile makes. There are no connecting words. Revelation 12:4 states, “And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth.” Taken at face value, the simple sense doesn’t really make sense. An actual dragon does not seem to be in keeping with the rest of the passage so the reader must look at the surrounding context for clarification. A few verses later we are told that “the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan” (v. 9)—Scripture thus explaining the figure of speech used a few verses earlier. This is the vivid picture the author wants his reader to have in mind when thinking of Satan. To accomplish this, he uses a metaphor which, in no way, detracts from the face-value understanding of this passage. It enhances it.

Another thing to remember is that different metaphors may sometimes be used in Scripture to describe the same person or thing, each metaphor giving the reader a different but more thorough understanding of the important characteristics of the subject matter at hand. Jesus Christ is depicted in various places as the Son of God, the Lamb, the Lion, the Good Shepherd, and the King of kings. These metaphors, although quite varied, give the reader a more complete picture of Christ and the role He plays throughout history.

To further illustrate the use of metaphor, Scripture depicts the man we commonly refer to as *Antichrist*, by using a number of different metaphors. Actually, although the name Antichrist is most often associated with prophecy, you may be surprised to know that the term is used only once, in the first epistle of John, to describe this exceedingly powerful and evil man who will stand against Christ in the end times. The term is never used in the books that are heavily prophetic, such as

Revelation. Instead, in this final book of the Bible the term most often used to describe Antichrist is *beast*. In addition, titles such as the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, the one who makes desolate, and prince are also used for Antichrist. Each term gives us a better understanding of the nature and character of this end-time figure who is so intent on destroying the elect of God.

The point I am trying to make is this: different writers may use different words to describe the same person or thing. These are figures of speech and do not detract from the natural, normal, customary sense—that is, the face-value sense—of the passage in which these figures of speech are being used. Instead, when the plain sense *doesn't* make sense, Scripture must be compared with Scripture, letting Scripture determine the meaning of the comparative language the author is using. Once you learn how writers use certain metaphors, you will find that there is normally a consistent use of those metaphors throughout their writings. Remember: *the Bible is always your best dictionary when determining the meaning of a metaphor!*

Idioms are the final example of a comparative figure of speech. Idioms are basically what we think of today as expressions. When Paul refers to his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7), he doesn’t mean that a thorn was literally embedded in his flesh. Rather, as the context goes on to say, he is referring to “a messenger of Satan (given) to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself.” When Christ said to Paul, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 26:14, KJV), the plain sense again does not seem to make sense. Why? Because Christ was using an idiom, an expression, to question Paul’s past opposition to Christ. The time had come for Paul to face up to reality.

We all use expressions in our everyday conversations without distorting the face-value meaning of what we are trying to convey to others. So do the writers of Scripture. When they do use expressions, like similes and metaphors, they are easy to spot, although it may take a little study to fully appreciate or understand the full meaning of the expression being used.

SUBSTITUTION

The second category considered to be a figure of speech, is substitutionary in nature. The most common example of this figure is *metonymy*. I realize that the English scholars' term, *metonymy*, is not a word used in everyday, normal conversation. To be perfectly candid with you, spotting one may even be more difficult, and certainly more difficult to explain. In this case I think one example may be far better than a thousand words of explanation.

In Psalm 23:5, David states, "You prepare a table before me." By "table" he means a feast on the table. David substituted "table" for "feast." Why, I don't know. But it is clear that David meant to say that God put more than just plates, knives, forks, and spoons on a table. Rather, God prepared a feast for David in front of his enemies—God superabundantly blessed David even in the very presence of his enemies. Enough said about metonymies!

AMPLIFICATION

The third category considered a figure of speech uses amplification in order to make the underlying meaning of the text more clear. This figure of speech is easy to spot. When amplification is used, an idea or thing is stated and then that idea or thing is clarified—or amplified—by the addition of more information. This is referred to as *parallelism*. Parallelism is most often employed in poetical writing like Psalms and Proverbs.

As the word *parallel* would seem to indicate, parallelism normally consists of two separate thoughts, side by side, used in tandem with one another to bring greater meaning to the text. Parallelism is structured around several basic patterns. Note, for example, Psalm 2:4:

*He that sits in the heavens will laugh,
Yahweh will hold them in derision.*

In this example, these two lines mean exactly the same thing, a very common pattern used in parallelism. Opposite or contrasting thoughts can also be used. We find this contrasting

usage in Psalm 1:6. Here, the Psalmist says:

*For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

In this example, these two lines have the exact opposite meaning. Therefore, as we can see here, parallelism is used to amplify the meaning of the first line by restating the same truth, only differently by offering a contrast, an opposite idea or truth in the second line.

It is interesting to note that in the original languages, these parallel sentences also tended to be approximately the same length, whether measured in terms of words or syllables, giving parallelism a poetic feel. Much of this meter, however, was lost in the translation from Hebrew or Greek into English.

PRINCIPLE 5

LOOK FOR NEAR/FAR IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS IN PROPHETIC PASSAGES

GENERAL COMMENTS CONCERNING THE STUDY OF PROPHECY

The four principles stated above are necessary for a face-value understanding of what the Author/author intended regardless of what passage of Scripture one is studying. Prophecy, on the other hand, is a unique category of Scripture which requires special attention when using our face-value understanding of what is being communicated. This is especially true given the tremendous abuse prophetic passages of Scripture have experienced over the years.

Three general comments need to be made about the study of the prophetic Scriptures. *First*, careful study of various texts in the Old and New Testaments will reveal that the different terminology and styles of the writers will be used to describe the same event or issue with equal and consistent truthfulness, although often not in the same detail or from the same per-

spective as the other. One need only look at the first coming of Christ to see this principle in operation. Psalm 22, written by David, gives the reader one perspective of the crucifixion of Christ; Isaiah 53 gives another perspective of exactly the same event; while Daniel 9:26 simply says, "Messiah will be cut off and have nothing." Either the context or the similarity of the events described must be present for the student of prophecy to make the connection between the passages in question. But where a genuine connection exists, the different perspectives found in various passages bring a fuller understanding of the same event.

Second, our understanding of the end times will increase as history continues to unfold and verify biblical prophecy. Many of the prophetic passages of the Old Testament were unclear to those who first heard or read them. God's people were not certain whether a given prophetic message related to their own times or to the future. As with some prophetic passages, the biblical language clarified several uncertainties as to the question of whether prophetic Scriptures applied to their present time or the eschatological future. Modern students of prophecy have the great advantage of looking back and learning from the actual fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in connection with the Lord's first coming.

Daniel was told to "conceal words and seal up the book until the end of time . . . for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end-time" (Dan. 12:4, 9). When the end times actually do come, the church will have had a long historical base from which to gain understanding of many of the prophetic passages that hitherto were a mystery. History has been, and will continue to be, a source of prophetic insight for those who carefully study God's Word. Since Israel gained possession and control of her homeland in 1948, for instance, we have a perspective on end-time prophecy that could only have been understood after that momentous event occurred.

Lastly, by taking a face-value understanding of what the writers were communicating to Israel, there is strong confirma-

tion in the way the Old Testament prophecies were literally fulfilled in the life of Christ. For example, the Old Testament contains over three hundred prophecies concerning the first and second comings of Christ. Taking into consideration the duplications of many prophecies that often deal with the same issue, fifty, give or take, without exception were fulfilled at face value at His first coming. It is not only a matter of faith but of biblical principle to expect the many prophecies of Christ's second coming to be fulfilled with equal literalness and completeness. Prophecy that is not fulfilled exactly as stated, is not true prophecy at all, proving itself to be simply misguided human speculation. In other words, prophecy is not "possibility," but a pronouncement by God of what *will* happen, regardless.

A biblical argument that speaks directly to how prophecy should be understood is found in Deuteronomy 18:20–22. Here the Israelites are told how to determine if what a prophet is telling them is truly prophecy from God or mere human speculation. The conclusion of this passage is that "when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken." God then states in verse 20, that when this individual's prophecy does not come true, "that prophet shall die." Only a literal, face-value understanding of what is being prophesied could ever be put to a test and the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming bear witness to this.

When we use this principle of taking Scripture at face value, the Bible suddenly comes alive in a new way. We have a renewed confidence in the reliability of God's Word—that it is literally true, that it is something laypersons can understand, and that the events described in its pages really will happen exactly as written, according to God's sovereign time and plan. Thus, especially in our study of prophecy, we need not approach the Bible looking for an obscure, allegorized, or spiritualized meaning, but for a literal understanding of events that have actually occurred, or will actually happen sometime in the future.

THE NEAR/FAR PRINCIPLE

It is recognized that many prophetic passages of Scripture, in both Testaments, have both near and far implications and applications. In other words, prophecy often operates on two levels of fulfillment at the same time. On the first level, there is a divinely revealed “near” prediction relating to a soon-coming event. But, on a second level, there is a corresponding “far” prediction that will be fulfilled at a later time or in the end-time events. An example of this are the warnings given to the seven churches of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. Clearly, some of the warnings dealt with very real issues that existed when Revelation was written. But equally true is the fact that some of these warnings apply to the end times at the second coming of Christ. To five of the seven churches, Christ specifically warns of possible judgment that will occur when He personally returns. This points to events that will occur long after the seven churches have ceased to exist.

The failure to recognize and apply this principle has caused immeasurable confusion among even the most godly and scholarly students of Scripture. Obviously, a misuse of this principle, as of any other, will also cause confusion and misunderstanding. For a near/far interpretation to be valid, *it must clearly be allowed for by the context and by the specific wording of the text itself*, as well as be consistent with the rest of Scripture speaking to the same issue.

3

Summing It Up

In my opinion there is only one legitimate hermeneutic, only one method of understanding that we can use if we seek to know the truth of God's Word. *Any given passage of Scripture must be understood at face value, in its most natural, normal, customary sense, making allowances for obvious figures of speech, taking the passage in its proper context, and taking into consideration all other passages of Scripture dealing with the same issue. When in doubt as to the meaning of a particular word or phrase, let Scripture interpret Scripture! Look for the common denominator that harmonizes all the passages dealing with a particular issue, not just those that prove your presupposition at the expense of rejecting those that don't. Once the common denominator is found, then we have truth, but not before. And once we have truth, that truth stands in judgment of us; never do we stand in judgment of it!*

In 2 Corinthians 1:13, Paul indicates that he was writing to the common people of Corinth, many of whom were uneducated. In essence, the apostle was telling these believers that if they had eyes to read God's Word or ears to hear it, they could understand it. God's Word was written and is translated in order that plain and simple people like you and me, without theological degrees, can understand it.

Over the years I have often been challenged because of the positions I take on certain controversial doctrinal issues. By now my challengers have come to realize that I will never take a strong position unless I have first done my homework—until I have looked at all the passages dealing with the particular issue at hand, using the hermeneutic described in these pages, being sure that I can point to chapter and verse that, when taken at

face value, back up my argument. With this accomplished, I am unafraid of some hidden passage that I cannot harmonize with the position I am taking. It is always a particular delight when I can show my opponent that his argument is not with me, or with the position I am taking, but with what the Scriptures clearly say. Usually that puts an end to the debate.

If we follow this face-value method of understanding what Scripture is teaching, we will never have reason to be ashamed or embarrassed—on any issue! Scripture will become practical and useful, speaking to every facet of our lives, from spiritual issues, to family, to interpersonal relationships, to business, to origins, to science, to history, to psychology, to health, to law, and to the timing of Christ's wondrous return to take His own to be with Him—a central feature of the great hope of the church. But to do this, each one of us is required to “be diligent to present [himself or herself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *handling accurately the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15, emphasis added).

It was because they had such unreserved reverence for and trust in God's Word that the Bereans were commended as being “more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Be a Berean!